



Dear Parents,

The days slip by and half-term approaches. Hard to believe really. Time flies at the top of St Thomas Hill! This week's newsletter takes on a range of subjects: among them, stoic philosophy, dark matter, seismic waves and, er...hot chocolate.

Lessons from a Roman Emperor: The Practical Philosophy of Marcus Aurelius



On Wednesday after school, Lower Fifth scholars were introduced to the ideas and life of Stoic philosopher and Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. After taking the group through the philosophical background – Socrates, Diogenes, Zeno, Epictetus – Mr Whitman asked the scholars to identify from a list those items they considered to be under their control. The exercise opened up a lively debate that led naturally to Epictetus' claim that happiness – tranquillity, effectiveness, flourishing – depended upon our ability to know the difference between what we can and cannot control, which led in turn to Epictetus' statement that how we think about the events that befall us is essentially, crucially, what matters. With an overview of the Stoic understanding of what is good, bad and indifferent, and with Marcus contextualized, the group considered quotations taken from the Emperor's *Meditations*. These included how to think about others' opinions of us and how we might avoid fooling ourselves as we went about the invaluable but challenging task of coming to know ourselves. The session drew to a close by pointing up, respectively, the importance of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus to Nelson Mandela and US fighter pilot James Stockdale. It finished with a brief discussion of Marcus Aurelius' view that the common law of reason is what binds humanity together to make us citizens of the world and family to each other. In seeking to suggest to scholars the value of knowing ourselves, Mr Whitman of course began to know them – through their quick insight, rapid understanding and intellectual engagement.



Dark matters

Mrs Hummerstone informs me that the Cambridge Physics centre has moved its Sixth Form lecture series online this year. They are free to view and include topics such as dark matter and CERN, gravitational wave detection, plastics and Helium microscopes. The lectures should be of interest to our A level physicists but may also appeal to other Sixth Form scientists and possibly some keen Upper Fifth pupils.

<https://outreach.phy.cam.ac.uk/programme/cpc>

"Wagner Wednesday"

Hot chocolate is one form of dark matter I suppose. Mrs Burton reports that pupils have enjoyed two lovely days in consecutive weeks for "Wagner Wednesday". U5 (last week) and M5 (this week) enjoyed hot chocolate, cake and a chat al fresco.





Watson Socials

Mr Hodge reports...

"Watson House has organised lunchtime socials this week for Middle Fifth and the Lower Fifth within their bubbles. On Monday the Middle Fifth were invited to make their own pizza and indulge in some fizzy drinks! It was a lovely opportunity to catch up with pupils now that the dust has settled and share lunch with them. Quote from Henry - "I never really liked pizza until today!" That's success in my eyes!



The Watson Lower Fifth were invited to play board games during lunch on Thursday...and of course indulge in eating donuts, sweets and drinking beverages. The social began with a frenzy of eating followed by games such as Uno, Flippin fish, Guess who and even a swift Monopoly game that surprisingly ended in smiles. Whilst all this was going on Mr Anderson and Gus had a fierce game of chess that was epic! Mr A ended up victorious although I'm sure a rematch is on the cards. Lovely to see the Lower Fifth bonding near the end of their first half term."



A-Level Politics

Sixth Form Politics students have developed insight this half term into the workings of the US electoral system. They have learnt about the difference between caucuses and primaries and discussed the important role they play in choosing American presidents. The students have enjoyed studying the recent US presidential debates and have had to think critically about whether these forums are an effective way to educate voters about each candidate's position on major issues. This week in class, they learned about the confusing political entity that is the Electoral College! Anticipation is rising ahead of the election on November 3 and both staff and students cannot wait to analyse the outcome!

Sports News

Our fantastic Chelsea FC development coaches were back in action this week, leading the first session of many for our gifted and talented players. A huge thank you to Will and Ashley for providing a top-class energetic experience for the L5 and sixth form groups on Thursday. Our pupils worked exceptionally hard and we look forward to watching them develop further as players over the coming weeks.





The horse riders were out and about at Barton Fields Stables in Littlebourne being put through their paces too. It's a superb option for those wanting to develop their equestrian skills in a lovely location.



Art Department

The Art Department continues to buzz with creativity. Experimentation has been the focus for the week across all disciplines. In Art, The Lower Sixth pupils have been making their own drawing tools out of found natural forms (grasses, leaves, twigs etc.) in order to create textured and creative backgrounds. They used various inks to draw with, alongside spray bottles filled with water, resulting in more organic and fluid forms. The students had great fun and achieved some impressive results.



In Photography, the Upper Sixth pupils have also been tasked to focus on experimentation. The line between photography and art has definitely been blurred as a result of their exploration - combining paint with photographs, ripping, layering, re-ordering and drawing into them. Pupils continue to explore the use of traditional processes in the photographic darkroom producing photograms layered with images and then inverted.





Geography

Our Geographers have been busy too; using a slinky to demonstrate seismic waves in the U6, billowing bed sheets to show glacial landforms in 3D and updating the Temperature Tree after many months missed through lockdown. Mr Kincaid was also seen carrying a large bag of sand and a fan up to the hub. I am told he has been making sand dunes with the L6!



Introduction to social media for parents

This practical guide for parents and carers whose children are using social media platforms was developed by Internet Matters, NSPCC, Parent Zone, and UK Safer Internet Centre:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Internet-Matters-Guide-Official-UK-Social-Media-Guidance.pdf>

Please do contact us if you would like to discuss online safety.



Careers

Mrs Judi-Sprinks reports:

"The U5 are adapting very well to the new format of their individual Careers meeting and I would like to express my thanks to them for this. The meetings are proving, as always, to be very informative and inspirational. I have received some positive comments to pass on to the Careers Adviser.

I am also receiving some requests from pupils in U5/L6/U6 to discuss all sorts of Careers matters. Happy to listen, answer questions and help with research etc. There will be a copy of The Next Steps magazine for the Sixth Formers in the D block today.

Reminder for all students in U5/L6/U6 to check their email regularly for invitations to virtual presentations and Careers talks. The next will be with a representative from the Army, explaining the new and very generous bursaries offered across a number of career paths within the Army."

MFL

The MFL department would like to wish all Spanish speakers and learners a very happy Dia de Hispanidad, 2020 for Monday 12 October:

<https://www.officeholidays.com/holidays/spain/hispanic-day>

Mathematics Clinics

Week A U5 Tuesday 14:00, AML

Week B L5 Tuesday 14:00, CDJ/ELW

Week B M5 Tuesday 14:00, ELW/CDJ

Sixth Form: contact teacher directly for an appointment

Dr Jones is also giving classes in advanced IGCSE topics on Saturdays mornings online. Those interested in participating should email him at erj@stedmunds.org.uk.



Science Clinics

Week A U5th 1.20 Lab 2 - Monday Biology, Tuesday Chemistry, Wednesday Physics

Week B M5th 1.50 Lab 2 - Monday Biology, Tuesday Chemistry, Wednesday Physics

Have a great weekend, stay safe and thanks for your continuing support.

I'll leave you with my favourite Marcus Aurelius quotation:

"Our life is what our thoughts make it."

Kind regards,

Edward O'Connor

Head